

**STATEMENT OF SUE MASICA, CHIEF OF STAFF, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE,
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON
NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS AND PUBLIC LANDS OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE
ON NATURAL RESOURCES, CONCERNING H. R. 1100, A BILL TO REVISE THE
BOUNDARY OF THE CARL SANDBURG HOME NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE IN
THE STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.**

APRIL 17, 2007

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 1100, a bill that would expand the boundary of the Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site (site) in the State of North Carolina.

The Department supports the enactment of this bill, but would like to work with the committee to amend the bill to make it more consistent with the site's 2003 General Management Plan and other recent boundary expansion bills.

Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site currently includes 264 acres of Connemura Farm, an estate purchased by Sandburg in 1945 near the pre-Civil War resort town of Flat Rock, North Carolina. Following Sandburg's death in 1967, his wife deeded the estate to the Federal government. The National Historic Site was authorized one year later, in 1968.

Sandburg, though perhaps best known for his poetry celebrating the lives of common American people, was also a Pulitzer prize-winning biographer of Abraham Lincoln, children's author, and a collector of folk music. Fellow author H.L. Mencken declared that Sandburg was "indubitably

an American in every pulse-beat."

H. R. 1100 would authorize the acquisition, from willing sellers, of interests in 115 acres of land contiguous to the Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site. The bill would also authorize the use of up to 5 of these 115 acres for a visitor center and parking facilities.

Land or easement acquisition is estimated to cost between \$300,000 and \$2.25 million.

Management of these new lands is estimated to cost less than \$10,000 annually. These acquired lands could be used for a visitor center, estimated to cost about \$3 million, but that project, as well as the additional costs mentioned in this paragraph, would be subject to the budget prioritization process of the NPS. Annual operation of the visitor center is expected to cost \$345,000 annually. The costs of operating a shuttle are not known at this time. No funding has yet been identified for any of these costs.

Acquisition of 110 of the 115 acres proposed in H.R. 1100 would allow the site to protect the view that Carl Sandburg and his neighbors enjoyed from Big Glassy Mountain. Big Glassy overlook is the highest point at Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site and a popular stop for visitors. Sandburg and his family often visited this granite outcrop to enjoy its stunning views of surrounding mountains and valleys. The majority of the overlook is within the authorized park boundary. However, the overlook precipice as well as the view below it, lies on private property outside the authorized boundary. Purchasing conservation easements or fee simple property rights from willing sellers in the viewshed would allow the site to protect the

pastoral view from Sandburg's estate.

The acquisition of 5 acres for a visitor center and parking lot would help to solve traffic and safety problems along Little River Road, the thoroughfare that forms the site's northern boundary and provides excellent views of the site's pastures, barns, and Side Lake. When the site's existing parking area is full, vehicles enter and exit from Little River Road, searching for an open space. Some visitors park on the shoulder of Little River Road and walk to the site. The presence of park vehicles, pedestrians, and speeding traffic on Little River Road is a hazard to all. The local community has expressed concern about this issue, but there is no additional parking available in the community.

To solve these problems, the site's 2003 General Management Plan proposes acquiring up to 5 acres to build a visitor center and parking facility, and offering shuttle service from the facility to the main house. In order to protect the historic character of the site, the National Park Service would like this facility to be located outside the 110 acres that are proposed to protect the views from Big Glassy Mountain. An appropriate location would be near, but not necessarily contiguous with the park's boundary, perhaps fronting Little River Road or Highway 225. H.R. 1100 would need to be amended to allow the National Park Service to acquire 5 acres near, but not contiguous to, the site's boundary. No funding or operation decisions have been made about implementing a shuttle system.

The National Park Service contacted each landowner that holds an interest in the 110 acres

proposed for acquisition during the planning process for the site's 2003 General Management Plan. All of these owners agreed to have their parcels included in the map and proposal to expand the park. The Village of Flat Rock, North Carolina supports the proposal for a visitor center, parking facility, and shuttle service.

H.R. 1100 applies boundary expansion criteria from the 1978 National Parks and Recreation Act. In the 29 years since that Act was signed into law, Congressional committees and the National Park Service have developed and refined these criteria. We would like to work with the subcommittee to amend H.R. 1100 to make it more consistent with recent boundary adjustment bills.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared testimony. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or any members of the subcommittee might have.